

Video script for Ursula Stephens address for: socialinclusion.gov.au

(Super: Senator the Hon Ursula Stephens, Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector)

Hello and welcome to the Australian Government's social inclusion website.

What is it we mean when we talk about social inclusion? It's about making sure that all Australians have the opportunity to participate fully in the economic, social and civic life of our country. This means creating pathways into work providing greater opportunities to learn new things, connecting people with their communities and letting their voices be heard.

Social inclusion is also about understanding why some Australians don't get a fair go. What's happening in people's lives that mean they drop out of work or education, or are prevented from connecting with family, friends and their local community. The government wants to build bridges within our society—between those who have plenty and those who have little, between governments and communities, and between those community organisations who act as the glue within our society, so that no one is left behind.

We have set a number of social inclusion priorities in this first term of government and you can find out more about them on this website.

One of these is helping jobless families to break out of the disadvantage that long term joblessness brings. We know that children in jobless families are often very vulnerable – missing out on much of the social and economic interaction that most of us take for granted. So we are developing new strategies and programs to target children's development and learning. We want to create new pathways to work for those who have been out of the workforce, supported by the right mix of training, skills development and work experience.

And in these tough economic times, we want to support those regions, areas and communities that are experiencing the most difficulties. At the same time we have targeted homelessness, and want to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage around Australia.

All of this requires coordination and cooperation – between governments and within communities. We know that stand-alone and ad-hoc activities don't achieve meaningful results for the most vulnerable in our society. We have to tackle the underlying issues that lead to social exclusion - like poverty, homelessness and mental illness, drug and alcohol dependence, domestic violence, and lack of community connectedness.

We want our citizens have better access to information about the Government's work, and we want to be able to hear from Australians about what works best for them.

The socialinclusion.gov.au website aim is to provide comprehensive, up-to-date information on new initiatives and the latest research. Through this website we want to encourage participative democracy. We want you to have your say on the issues that are important to you.

So, the website will provide the platform for building and strengthening our relationships.

Through this site, you can access information about how the Government is progressing on our Social Inclusion agenda.

We will be updating the website regularly and adding new features as our agenda progresses.

Subscribe to the Social Inclusion e-bulletins, and please come back to the site often!

socialinclusion.gov.au is here for you.

You can email us from the site to let us know what you think, and make suggestions for any new features.